

Message Text

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51

ACTION ARA-10

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R 131420Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5086

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, BL

SUBJ: BOLIVIAN REACTION TO "DECLARATION OF AYACHUCHO"

1. INITIAL BOLIVIAN MEDIA REACTION TO THE BATTLE OF AYACUCHO
COMMEMMORATIVE CEREMONIES AND THE SUBSEQUENT "DECLARATION OF
AYACUCHO" HAS FOCUSED ALMOST ENTIRELY ON THE PARAGRAPH IN THE
"DECLARATION" WHICH CALLS ATTENTION TO BOLIVIA'S LANDLOCKED
STATUS. INCLUSION OF THIS PARAGRAPH IN THE "DECLARATION" IS
ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY VIEWED AS A TRIUMPH FOR THE PERSONAL
DIPLOMACY OF PRESIDENT BANZER AND FOREIGN MINISTER GUZMAN
SORIANO. THE MORE EUPHORIC COMMENTATORS, INCLUDING GOB
PROPAGANDISTS, CLAIM THAT THE "DECLARATION" REPRESENTS THE
FIRST OFFICIAL CHILEAN RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY
BOLIVIA'S LANDLOCKED STATUS SINCE BOLIVIA LOST ITS OUTLET TO
THE SEA TO CHILE IN 1879.

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2. WHILE MODERATE BOLIVIAN POLITICAL COMMENTATORS AND EXPERTS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS HAVE TENDED TO EMPHASIZE THE NEED FOR MORE SOLID DIPLOMATIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN ORDER TO REGAIN "ACCESS TO THE SEA", THE GOB APPEARS DETERMINED TO PLAY UP THE "DECLARATION OF AYACUCHO" AS, IN ITSELF, A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT ON THE ROAD TO FULFILLMENT OF BOLIVIA'S SUPREME FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVE. FULL-PAGE GOVERNMENT ADS IN THE LA PAZ NEWSPAPERS OF DECEMBER 11 HAVE ACCLAIMED BANZER FOR HIS ALLEGED DIPLOMATIC TRIUMPH IN LIMA. IN ADDITION, THE SEMI-OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER HOY HAILED THE AYACUCHO EVENTS IN EDITORIAL HEADLINES WITH THE PHRASE "THE BOLIVIAN CAUSE TRIUMPHANT" ON DECEMBER 11, AFTER PROVIDING SEVERAL DAYS OF INTENSIVE COVERAGE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF BANZER AND GUZMAN IN LIMA.

3. COMMENT: THE BOLIVIAN REACTION TO THE "DECLARATION OF AYACUCHO" REFLECTS THE COUNTRY'S WELL-KNOWN CONCERN OVER ITS LAND-LOCKED STATUS, AND THE OFTEN EMOTIONAL MANNER IN WHICH THAT PROBLEM IS VIEWED BY BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENTS AND PUBLIC OPINION AT LARGE. THE BANZER GOVERNMENT'S POLICY DECISION TO GIVE RENEWED EMPHASIS TO THE "ACCESS TO THE SEA" QUESTION IN 1974 REFLECTS BOTH A DESIRE TO REAP DOMESTIC POLITICAL BENEFITS FROM THE ISSUE AND A SINCERE QUEST FOR INCREASED INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION TO THIS KEY BOLIVIAN CONCERN, PERHAPS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE CURRENT WIDELY-PUBLICIZED TENSIONS IN PERU-CHILE RELATIONS. IN THIS LATTER SENSE, THE "DECLARATION OF AYACUCHO" UNDOUBTEDLY REPRESENTS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE GOB'S YEAR-OLD POLICY OF ATTRACTING LATIN AMERICAN ATTENTION TO THE MEDITERRANEAN ISSUE, IF ONLY BECAUSE BOTH THE PERUVIAN PRESIDENT AND THE CHILEAN FOREIGN MINISTER PUT THEIR SIGNATURES TO THE DOCUMENT. HOWEVER, BANZER WILL NOW BE FACED WITH THE PROBLEM OF PRODUCING MORE SUBSTANTIVE DIPLOMATIC RESULTS, IF PUBLIC OPINION IS NOT TO SUFFER A RAPID LETDOWN FROM THE MEDIA-INDUCED EUPHORIA OF THE PAST FEW DAYS. ONE POSSIBLE SIGN OF THE DIRECTION WHICH BANZER MAY TAKE WERE HIS COMMENTS, UPON RETURNING TO LA PAZ DECEMBER 11, TO THE EFFECT THAT THE GOB IS GIVING POSITIVE CONSIDERATION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF RE-OPENING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CHILE. STEDMAN

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